

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 572

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

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AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 6083

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, PINT, PFOR, SHUM

SUBJECT: INTERIOR MINISTER STATEMENT ON DETAINEES

REF: SANTIAGO 5561, 4838, 4663

1. SUMMARY: IN OCT 3 STATEMENT, INTERIOR MINISTER BENAVIDES INDICATED THAT ONLY 700-ODD PERSONS ARE SUBJECT TO EARLY RELEASE AS RESULT OF PRESIDENT PINOCHET'S "CHALLENGE" TO USSR AND CUBA OF SEPT 11 TO RELEASE POLITICAL PRISONERS THEY HOLD ONE A ONE-FOR-ONE BASIS. BENAVIDES SPECIFICALLY EXCLUDED PERSONS AWAITING TRIAL OR ALREADY CONVICTED (WHICH WE ESTIMATE TO NUMBER AROUND 4,000). LATER RELEASE OF SOME OF THESE PERSONS WAS NOT RULED OUT, BUT STRONG IMPLICATION OF BENAVIDES STATEMENT IS THAT THEY WILL CONTINUE TO BE HELD FOR AT LEAST NEAR FUTURE. IN MEANTIME, PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN AGAINST USSR CONTINUES. END SUMMARY.

2. INTERIOR MINISTER GENERAL CESAR BENAVIDES BEGAN NATIONWIDE BROADCAST EVENING OCT 3 WITH PROTEST AGAINST "DISTORTION" BY FOREIGN PRESS OF NUMBER OF DETAINEES IN CHILE. SAID TRUE NUMBER OF THOSE DETAINED UNDER STATE OF SIEGE EMERGENCY PROVISIONS IS CONFIDENTIAL

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NOW 748 RPT 748, DOWN FROM 1,134 AS OF SEPT 11 (DATE OF PINOCHET

SPEECH). RELEASE OF 386 PERSONS SINCE SEPT 11 DEMONSTRATES GOC IS KEEPING ITS WORD TO INVESTIGATE BACKGROUND OF EACH DETAINEE, THEN RELEASE OR CHARGE HIM.

3. BENAVIDES INDICATED THAT WITHIN "PERIOD OF DAYS" ALL OF 748 WILL BE RELEASED EXCEPT "THOSE WHO BECAUSE OF GRAVITY OF OFFENSES OR SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF THEIR SITUATION MUST BE SUBJECTED TO TRIAL, PERFORM SENTENCES, OR ANSWER FOR THEIR ANTINATIONAL OR VIOLENT CONDUCT." (HE GAVE NO INDICATION AS TO HOW MANY OF THESE WOULD HAVE TO LEAVE COUNTRY; OCT 4 HIS UNDERSECRETARY, ENRIQUE MONTERO, SAID IT WOULD TAKE ANOTHER MONTH'S WORK TO KNOW WHO CAN HAVE FULL LIBERTY, AND WHO WILL HAVE TO GO INTO EXILE.) GOC THUS IS IN POSITION TO CARRY OUT ITS PART UNDER PINOCHET'S CHALLENGE TO USSR AND CUBA, WHO HAVE MAINTAINED "GUILTY SILENCE." WORLD CAN COUNT ON GOC'S WORD, AND ALL THOSE WHO DESERVE IT "WILL BE PLACED IN LIBERTY."

4. BENAVIDES MADE CAREFUL DISTINCTION BETWEEN ABOVE DETAINEES, AGAINST WHOM CHARGES HAVE NOT BEEN BROUGHT, AND "THOSE PERSONS WHO HAVE BEEN PLACED AT THE DISPOSITION OF MILITARY OR REGULAR TRIBUNALS"; LATTER "ARE UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE COMPLETELY AUTNOMOUS JUDICIAL BRANCH."

5. RESPONDING TO CRITICISM THAT GOC HAS BEEN EITHER TOO SEVERE ("MANO DURA") OR TOO LENIENT ("MANO BLANDA") ON QUESTION OF DETAINEES, BENAVIDES STRESSED GOC IS FOLLOWING "JUST POLICY" THAT CONSISTS IN PUNISHING THOSE WHO HAVE COMMITTED CRIMES AGAINST CHILE AND ITS INHABITANTS, BUT AT SMAE TIME ALLOWING SUCH PERSONS THE OPPORTUNITY TO REPENT AND TO REBUILD THEIR LIVES.

6. IN RELATED DEVELOPMENTS, PRESS REPORTED DETENTION CAMPS AT PISAGUA IN NORTH AND DAWSON ISLAND IN EXTREME SOUTH HAVE BEEN CLOSED. LATTER WAS KEPT OPEN FOR DETAINEES IN PUNTA ARENAS AREA AFTER TRANSFER OF SENIOR ALLENDE-ERA PERSONALITIES WAS EFFECTED IN MAY. COMMON CRIMINALS DETAINED AT PISAGUA WILL REPORTEDLY BE MOVED TO ANOTHER LOCATION IN THE SOUTH.

7. GENERAL PINOCHET OCT 3 RECEIVED DELEGATION OF UKRAINIAN EXILES RESIDENT IN ARGENTINA HEADED BY ONE VASILIO KOSIUK, WHO CONFIDENTIAL

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PRESENTED HIM LIST OF SOME 82 UKRAINIANS IN SOVIET PRISON CAMPS. PINOCHET PROMISED DELEGATION THAT CHILE WOULD CONTINUE TO PURSUE ITS CAMPAIGN TO WIN RELEASE OF SOVIET AND CUBAN POLITICAL PRISONERS.

8. COMMENT: BENAVIDES STATEMENT IS DISAPPOINTING, THOUGH NOT TOTALLY UNEXPECTED. IN SEPT 11 STATEMENT ON GOC WILLINGNESS TO RELEASE DETAINEES INTO EXILE (SANTIAGO 5561), PINOCHET SPOKE

OF PERSONS ELIGIBLE FOR RELEASE AS THOSE DETAINED UNDER STATE OF SIEGE AND THOSE BEING "TRIED FOR OTHER CRIMES", AND SAID THE POSSIBILITY "WOULD BE EXTENDED IN CERTAIN CASES TO PERSONS ALREADY CONDEMNED." THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE CONFUSION IN SANTIAGO ON NUMBER OF PERSONS FOR WHOM GOC WAS CONSIDERING RELEASE, BUT NEARLY EVERYONE EXCEPT GOC LUMPED TOGETHER ALL DETAINEES, WHETHER UNCHARGED, AWAITING TRIAL, OR SENTENCED, AS POSSIBILITIES.

9. BENAVIDES' STRESS ON DEFINITION OF "DETAINEES" AS ONLY THOSE HELD UNDER STATE OF SIEGE PROVISIONS AND NOT YET TURNED OVER TO COURT JURISDICTION FOR TRIAL, DATES FROM DISTINCTION MADE IN GOC SUBMISSION TO OAS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION IN JULY (SANTIAGO 4663) AND MADE PUBLIC IN PINOCHET'S INTERVIEW WITH AP AUG 12, WHEN HE USED FIGURE OF 2,000 DETAINEES (SANTIAGO 4838). SIMILAR FIGURE WAS USED LATER, BUT NEVER AS CLEARLY AS IN BENAVIDES' STATEMENT.

10. CAREFUL READING OF STATEMENT DOES NOT RULE OUT GOC RELEASE OF PERSONS AWAITING TRIAL OR SENTENCED, AND WE WOULD EXPECT TO SEE SOME, OVER TIME. MONTERO OCT 4 SAID CHIEF OF STATE'S AMNESTY COULD BE APPLIED ONLY TO PERSONS ALREADY TRIED, WHICH AT LEAST INDICATES AMNESTY IS BEING CONSIDERED. THUS APPEARS THAT ONCE PRESENT PROCESS DESCRIBED BY BENAVIDES HAS RUN ITS COURSE, SEVERAL THOUSAND PERSONS WILL STILL BE HELD IN CHILEAN JAILS AND DETENTION CENTERS ON INTERNAL SECURITY GROUNDS, AT LEAST FOR A TIME.
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